

### TT 13 Day 49 (Minor operations)

The Guvnor reckons the wheels begin to come off the wagon when you reach 70. What he means, I think, is that a body that has been abused physically, put through all sorts of stresses and strains and generally taken for granted over almost three quarters of a century eventually, like the 'Empire', gets fed up and fights back. I say he has been immensely lucky to have remained in such fair nick for so long. Yes, he's overweight (but not obese); yes, he's bald (but has not reached billiard-ball status yet) and yes, he's a bit stooped but that that is pure laziness as he knows what good posture is all about.

Last week he was allowed back into Salisbury District Hospital to have a chunk of ugly, poisonous tissue (no, not his nose) removed surgically from the side of his face. He had had an itchy bit under his ear for a bit and thought little of it until his barber, the urbane and laconic Giuseppe, asked if he had seen anyone about the lump. This was the same Giuseppe who, when the Guvnor rang him one day long before lockdown to ask if his shop in faraway Amesbury was open replied, "Yes; why?" The Guvnor told him he wanted to come for a haircut and Giuseppe asked, "Why?" Back to the plot, men who ignore their wives' 'encouragement' (nagging) to go to the doctor for months on end always seem to follow their barber's advice like lambs, and off he went.

Our excellent doctor snipped a bit off (I suspect there is a more technical term for that such as 'incision') and sent it off for analysis. The Guvnor was spared the medical jargon that came back but gathered that the two-page document showing the diagnosis could be summed

up by one word – nasty; the recommendation was equally clear – off, and quickly. 'Quickly', because of the present crisis, ended up as the end of May and he was carted off to hospital with some trepidation given his life-long prejudice that 'they are very unhealthy places and should be avoided'.

Listening to him tell his story afterwards, I was once again struck by just how good the NHS is and how we dogs miss out on such a privilege. Then I put it out of my mind when I remembered that it wasn't me paying my bills at the Vet and I didn't give it another thought.

He was booked in from a distance, tested for the virus and on the all clear dressed in hospital gear and shown into the theatre. He was to be operated on by a surgeon assisted by two trainee nurses and all supervised by a wise Consultant who had seen it all before, many times. He had also seen the Guvnor before; back in 1983 they had, apparently, served together in Hong Kong but it took a little while to unearth that fact. The Consultant's memory eventually clicked into place; "It's all coming back", he said, "I now remember a fit, bronzed, young man with a full-ish head of ginger hair who was at the top of his game." The Guvnor told him he was surprised he had taken so long to recognise him as little had changed, to which the curt reply was, "Oh, yes it has; now, lie to attention and don't move – my people have work to do and fidgeting and talking simply won't do." That's when the Guvnor remembered him, and did as he was told.

Lump gone, hopefully all nastiness expunged, stiches removed by Sister Sue and all has healed up nicely. The bonus is that he has had a bit of a face-lift.